

Stay Informed - Wisconsin's Winter Weather

Wisconsin's Winter Awareness

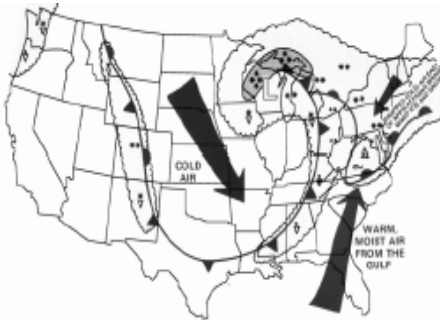


What Makes a Winter Storm?

Cold air: Below freezing temperatures in the clouds and near the ground are necessary to make snow and ice.

Moisture: Needed to form clouds and precipitation.

Lift: Something to raise the moist air to form clouds and precipitation, such as a front.



Where Do Winter Storms Develop?

* Storms that affect Wisconsin develop over southeast Colorado, northwest Canada, and over the southern Plains. These storms move toward the Midwest and use both the southward plunge of cold air from Canada and the northward flow of moisture from the Gulf of Mexico to produce heavy snow over the region.

* "Alberta Clippers," which develop in the lee of the Canadian Rockies and move southeast toward Wisconsin,

not only produce accumulating snow, but can also bring strong winds and extremely cold air to the state.

* Lake effect snowstorms develop as cold air moves across the relatively warmer waters of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. Moisture from the lakes is then deposited as heavy snow within several miles of the shore.

Flurries: Light snow falling for short durations. No accumulation or just a dusting.

Snow Showers: Snow falling at various intensities for brief periods of time. Some accumulation is possible.

Snow Squall: Intense snow showers accompanied by gusty winds which develop near the Great Lakes.

Blowing Snow: Wind-driven snow that reduces visibility and causes drifting.

Freezing Rain: Rain that falls onto a surface with a temperature below freezing. This causes the rain to freeze to surfaces such as trees, cars, and roads forming a coating or glaze of ice. Even small accumulations of ice can be hazardous.

Sleet: Raindrops that freeze into ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet usually bounces after hitting a surface and does not stick to objects. It can accumulate like snow and present a hazard to motorists.

Blizzard: Winds over 35 mph with snow and blowing snow reducing visibilities to near zero.